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In Summary

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Keeping the C.I.A. Away from Home

President Reagan is due to issue an order within the next few weeks disclosing how much extra leash he wants to give the Central Intelligence Agency. Last week, in an apparent attempt to douse a controversy over proposals urging a much freer hand, drafted by officials of the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies, a senior White House aide asserted that his boss wasn't contemplating a return to the agency's old ways. What Mr. Reagan will likely announce, Presidential counselor Edwin Meese 3d said, is a relaxation of some restrictions on intelligence operations abroad. "We are not going to put the C.I.A. into domestic espionage," he asserted, "or the F.B.I. into foreign intelligence."

Earlier in the month, it was reported that the intelligence officials had drafted for Mr. Reagan's consideration a kind of spook's dream sheet that appeared, among other things, to give the C.I.A. permission to conduct covert operations on the home front. Mr. Meese, and the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, Adm. Bobby R. Inman, in testimony in mid-March, downplayed the significance of the draft order and its drafters. Their assurances might or might not have assuaged civil libertarians' concerns; C.I.A. officials, including the general counsel of the agency, had a hand in the drafting.

Protecting civil liberties has been one professed concern of Administration spokesmen. Another, given less public attention, is safeguarding turf. In Congressional testimony, Attorney General William French Smith, asked about proposals for reducing his department's responsibility for monitoring intelligence activities, said he would "certainly anticipate" playing a "significant role in the process."